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For more information contact: Leah Gurowitz
(202) 879-1700

D.C. Superior Court's Fathering Court Program honored by Harvard

– *Bright Ideas* award goes to program helping fathers just out of prison reconnect with their children –

WASHINGTON, D.C. – On September 29, 2010, the D.C. Superior Court's Fathering Court Program will be recognized as a "Bright Idea" by Harvard University, honoring the program for its continuing success and growth. The Fathering Court Program was established three years ago to address the needs of children whose fathers have been incarcerated and to help fathers reentering the work force. One in four D.C. prisoners owes court-ordered child support. The Fathering Court Program set a goal of assisting those fathers get back into the workforce so that they can pay child support, but also help them re-establish emotional bonds with their children. Services include job skills training, résumé writing, job interview training, parenting skills, and time management. Led by Judge Milton Lee, the program currently assists 45-50 fathers. A few fathers who have been part of Fathering Court Program elected not to continue the rigorous program, but only one father has been re-arrested.

"The Fathering Court Program is one of our problem-solving courts, in which judges don't look at just guilt or liability, but try to help people put their lives back together. Along with our drug court, community courts, and Family Treatment Court, the Fathering Court program is a way in which the D.C. Superior Court helps D.C. residents and strengthens our community," said Chief Judge Lee Satterfield. "I commend Judge Lee on his dedication to this program; his commitment and strength of personality are responsible for its success. We at the Court are proud of him and honored by being recognized by Harvard University for our 'bright idea.'"

Bright Ideas is an initiative that recognizes creative and promising government programs and partnerships, which "...spotlights exemplary models of government innovation and advances efforts to address the nation's most pressing public concerns.¹" The initiative is offered through the Innovations in Government Program, a program of the Ash Center for Democratic Governance and Innovation at Harvard Kennedy School. As a Bright Idea, the Fathering Court will be highlighted on the Ash Center's Government Innovators Network (GIN) website at www.innovations.harvard.edu.

To see fathering court graduations, go to http://www.dccourts.gov/dccourts/docs/news/2010-01-29_DCFatheringCourtGradsGratefulForSecondChance_NC8.wmv and http://www.dccourts.gov/dccourts/docs/news/2009-06-12_jleeonnewschannel08talk.wmv. To see Judge Lee testifying before the Ways and Means Committee on the Fathering Court program, see <http://waysandmeans.house.gov/Hearings/Testimony.aspx?TID=8679>

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¹Ash Center for Democratic Governance and Innovation